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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000493

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PINS IR SA IZ

SUBJECT: VP HASHEMI ON MOD, SUNNI ROLE IN BSP, MODERATE FRONT

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

**¶1.** (S) Summary: VP Hashemi told the Ambassador February 8 that the Sunni Tawafuq bloc's nomination of Sunni MoD Abdul Qader during government formation was a "grave mistake." Hashemi reviewed examples of Abdul Qader's "weak" performance as Minister. The VP reported on progress with moderate front, noting that a recently completed draft plan for a kitchen cabinet was awaiting PM Maliki's approval. Hashemi expressed concern Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) implementation, saying that MNF-I must do more to consult civilian residents regarding ISF behavior and tactics. The VP worried that his credibility would be damaged if the Sunnis perceived the BSP was targeting them. End Summary.

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HASHEMI: SUPPORT FOR ABDUL QADER A GRAVE MISTAKE  
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**¶2.** (S) VP Hashemi said he regretted throwing Tawafuq support behind MoD Abdul Qader's candidacy. He called him a "weak person" who had allowed individuals with no military background (namely PM Military Affairs Advisor Bassima) an unacceptable level of access to the MoD. He said that Abdul Qader had indiscriminately implemented all the de-Ba'athification orders handed to him by the Higher National De-Ba'athification Commission that his predecessor had held in abeyance, leading to the forced retirement of several excellent generals who were not Ba'athists. He said that Abdul Qader was not the right man for the job, especially with BSP implementation on the horizon. On more than one occasion he had caught Abdul Qader "asleep on the job" -- unaware of the violent attacks as they occurred in various neighborhoods of Baghdad.

**¶3.** (S) When the Ambassador suggested that Hashemi meet with Abdul Qader to confront him directly with his concerns, Hashemi refused, saying that Abdul Qader was not at his level and was merely "his student." Further, Hashemi continued, Abdul Qader was now labeling himself an "independent" and trying to disassociate himself from Tawafuq. The VP alluded to "negative damaging information about Abdul Qader's military history" his office had uncovered recently which Hashemi did not wish to reveal at this time.

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MODERATE FRONT KITCHEN CABINET  
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**¶4.** (S) Hashemi said that he had been asked to draft proposals for a "kitchen cabinet" that would advise PM Maliki on key policy issues. Once the proposal is approved by the PM, Hashemi said, they would work on laying down procedures, an agenda, and a statement of principles that members would sign. The Ambassador urged Hashemi to ensure that each kitchen cabinet member understood they must mobilize support within their respective constituencies for the policies

agreed upon by the kitchen cabinet, and that this support would be reflected in the CoR, the Council of Ministers, and Constitutional Review negotiations. Hashemi questioned whether the Moderate Front was a workable solution. He said he believed Maliki did not have the support of Dawa or the Sadrist on this initiative.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR BSP SUCCESS  
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15. (S) VP Hashemi said that there must be increased consultation between MNF-I and Iraqi civilians to discuss the people's concerns and fears over BSP. He claimed that an understanding with civilians must be reached before the BSP was launched. He expressed concern over reports that militias in MoI uniforms had changed their tactics. They "behaved well" while carrying out joint operations with MNF-I forces, and waited until MNF-I left the area to carry out their ethnic cleansing and forced displacement campaign. Hashemi passed to the Ambassador a list of "Steps Crucial for the Success of the Baghdad Security Plan" which included detailed recommendations on public outreach and education on BSP, balanced representation in ISF, and respect for human rights.

16. (S) Hashemi said that the MNF air strikes that took place in support of ISF operations in Haifa Street in January inflicted collective punishment on area residents. The forced displacement that resulted from the recent Aamil neighborhood had further raised the suspicion of Sunnis about the Baghdad Security Plan. He said that since he had already come out in support of BSP, his reputation was on the line. MNF-I must refrain from collective punishment, Hashemi said,

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and "closely monitor ISF."  
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